

Bill: HB1355  
Position: Favorable

March 16, 2021

Dear Delegate Mike Griffith,

My name is Tracy Smith and my son is Jacob (Jake) Smith. We spoke virtually on DD Day for the Arc NCR regarding my son who is a transitioning student who is supposed to exit the school system in June 2021. I'm a single parent and my son has Down Syndrome as well as Autism. I am writing to you in regard to HB1355 Education Recovery Act. I've been that parent who has stayed on top of the transitioning process but the Covid 19 Pandemic has interfered with the timeline to allow for a smooth and easy transition as well as left us with many unknowns. Normally at this point we would have a plan in place and know where he would be on his new journey and future after high school. Since everything has been shut down and still unavailable for us to tour, this has left us not knowing where is a good fit for him. Over the years school has been a challenge for Jake but with modifications and accommodations he has excelled and loves school. Jake has worked so hard to get where he is today. Before school closed Jake was involved in Best Buddies, was part of the Bobcat Choir where he performed in school music concert, he was part of the weight training class, Sports for Life (Bowling, Bocce, Basketball). As part of his LifeSkills Program he was receiving community based instruction where he would go into the community with a group, he worked in the school cafeteria, worked at the elementary school as well as at the Hooper House where he was working on janitorial duties. Just before the schools closed down in March 2020, Jakes job coach had told us he was doing better than ever at his jobs. I feel the pandemic has caused my son to regress socially as well as losing all the work experience. Another year would allow him to understand the transition process, regain his social and life skills, get back to his jobs, friends and say goodbye to school so he can process it gradually. Jake also receives services thru an Autism Waiver which would normally end at age 21 when he exits school. The waiver works on social, life and behavioral skills. If school extends another year we also ask for the Autism Waiver to extend another year as well as this is a normal transitioning process for students.

Thank you for your support,  
Tracy Smith